

masses for souls ; the increasing establishment of chantries for that purpose; the attachment of the vast majority of Englishmen to the ceremonial of the only existing religion. The competition of rival beliefs is so obvious a factor in modern Christianity that it is hard for us to picture the mind of a person who had never heard of alternative religions. It is unlikely that one Englishman in ten thousand had any definite impression of what the Albigenese had been. No one had any real conception of the pre-Christian ages, and since the Templars had been suppressed, Englishmen were no longer in contact with Mahomedan ' heathenesse/ Religion meant nothing but the Catholic faith, the religion of the Pope and Bishops. To such a mind the idea of *dissent' would be intolerable and appalling. If we can imagine these conditions of thought, we may realise what a dead weight the Lollards had to move. Yet, as we have seen, the mass had already begun to stir a little even before they touched it.

The withdrawal, at the request of the House of Commons, of the ordinance for the arrest of heretics gave the missionaries a comparatively free hand for several years. Occasionally the King, occasionally one of the Bishops, set on foot a persecution of an individual preacher. But the denounced often escaped capture, for the local authorities did not help the Church to effect arrests, and public opinion did not allow of extreme measures. During this important period there were three cradles of Lollardry—the neighbourhood of Leicester, the West of England, and the capital.

It is easy to see why Leicester fell under this influence. Twelve miles outside the southern gate, on the high road to Egbury, lay the flourishing village of Lutterworth. Its fine parish-church has been enlarged but little altered since that day. From the arch over the entrance to the choir still looks down a quaint and dismal fresco of the Judgment, in which the figures of emaciated ghosts are rising from the clay at the sound of the last trumpet. The scene is not one of joyful resurrection, it is but a gathering of the pale and ghastly dead. Beneath this sad ensign Wycliffe ministered, and sometimes, perhaps, chose it to point his moral or to furnish his text. It **is** impossible to say what he did with his church, whether he